

# The Problem of the Negro Girl

1/31/23

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New York

Amsterdam News

Colored Big Sisters for colored girls is a fairly recent innovation. Until a comparatively few years ago all the colored girls brought before the Juvenile Court or recommended to the Big Sisters as being unruly or troublesome were handed over to the Protestant White Big Sisters.

Today there are several groups of Colored Big Sisters in existence. There is one in Manhattan, two in Brooklyn—the Urban League Big Sisters and the Colored Big Sisters Club, and others throughout the United States. For, after experimenting for several years, it has been definitely decided that just as the Catholic woman is best equipped to help the delinquent Catholic girl, just as the Protestant woman is best able to cope with the unfortunate Protestant girl, the Jewish woman with the Jewish girl, so the colored woman is the logical person to understand the problems of the underprivileged colored girl.

Faith in this principle is growing daily to such an extent that queries are coming from many parts of the country from respectable groups of colored women asking what is necessary to form Big Sister groups and how to go about working for the unfortunate colored girl.

Today there are nearly 200,000 Negroes in Greater New York, the greater number of whom are forced to wage a grim fight against poverty, congestion and squalid homes. All three of these conditions tend to increase delinquency, and yet it is surprising to note that in spite of unwholesome living conditions, there is no alarming amount of juvenile delinquency among the Negro population of New York. As a matter of fact, the ratio of well behaved and troublesome Negro children is just about the same as it is for their white brothers and sisters.

But, in spite of the fact that the problems of the Colored Big Sisters are not those of quantity, nevertheless, they have many serious conditions to face that are unknown to the other Big Brother and Big Sister organizations. To start with, life is far from simple for the Negro child. At an alarmingly early age they are compelled to come face to face with the ancient bogie of prejudice, discrimination and not infrequently with injustice. Moreover, the financial pressure in most Negro families is so great that both parents are forced to become wage earners and the children are left for long hours a prey to all the evil influences of the over-crowded streets. In addition, the Negro child gets very unequal educational ad-

vantages. In the State of Louisiana, for example, only \$1.31 is allowed for the education of each colored child, as against \$13.73 for each white child. In the North, where educational facilities are more nearly equal, financial pressure, as a general rule, forces the colored child out of school at an early age.

However, the little colored girls who are brought up before the Juvenile Court are there for precisely

the same type of offense that the white children are there for. Nevertheless, their difficulties are far more serious, for, while there are a dozen and one institutions or boarding schools that are ready to receive the little white girl, there is not a single institution in all New York City—and I believe the same condition exists in many other places—that is willing to help the unadjusted little colored girl over twelve years old who is merely a victim either of her environment or the natural unrest accompanying adolescence.

Take the case of Mary as an example. Up to the age of fourteen years Mary had been in every respect a normal child. She was conscientious at school and well behaved at home. Then all of a sudden, without any warning, Mary became unruly. From one of the best little girls in the school she soon became one of the worst. She was frequently a truant. The corner grocer complained that Mary had repeatedly helped herself to fruit from his stands. Her parents insisted that they could do nothing with the girl.

Mary was brought into the Children's Court and the Big Sister representative carefully investigated her case. The home was found to be very much like so

many homes in the congested Negro districts. Mary, her mother, her father and her three younger brothers and sisters all lived in three tiny rooms. Everywhere were evidences of extreme poverty and insufficient space. It was sordid and unattractive. The father was unable to support the large family on his meagre earnings, so Mary's mother went out to increase the family's income by what is known as day's work. The four children were left to themselves from eight in the morning until after seven at night. After that the parents were too tired to do much for Mary, and it is doubtful if they would have been successful if they had tried, for they were frankly unable to manage their daughter.

What was to be done with Mary? The Big Sister representative asked that question. The probation officer asked that question. The Judge of the Juvenile Court asked that question. Apparently there was no answer. The Brooklyn Urban League Big Sisters have the answer—training schools for girls, such as the Brooklyn Training School and Home for young Protestant white girls, Mount Loretto Home and Training School for young Catholic white girls on Staten Island, the Hebrew Sheltering and Guardian Society for young Jewish white girls and boys. It is hard to understand the policy of the great State and City of New York, willing to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars in the attempt to reform girls, but unwilling to spend a few thousands to protect, help and eventually save the underprivileged colored girl.

Obviously Mary should have been taken away from her home surroundings and placed in some institution where she would have been given sympathy, encouragement, help, direction and guidance. There are plenty of such institutions for white girls, but there is not one for the unadjusted colored girl. There are prison schools open to her, to be sure, but a place for the criminal is hardly the home to which Mary should be sent.

The colored Big Sisters are doing all that they can for Mary, but even a Big Sister cannot take the place of the mother who is forced to be absent from home all day. Not one, not even a Big Sister, can change the ugly, overcrowded household into a place of quiet beauty. No one, not even a Big Sister, can materially help Mary as long as she remains a poor little neglected waif in the midst of dull, sordid surroundings. There is more than a vague possibility that without a change in Mary's environment she will go further along the road to disaster, until at last she comes to the point where she is a candidate for the only institution that will receive her—the

jail.

But discouraging as our problems sound, we are not in the least discouraged. Indeed, the contrary is the case, for we realize that the Negro population all over the country is alive to the problems of juvenile delinquency. In Brooklyn we have an active group of Big Sisters working under the Brooklyn Urban League, a national organization made up of white and colored persons for the purpose of improving the condition of the Negro. This Big Sister group has about fifty active volunteer workers who are trying to do some constructive work for the unadjusted colored girl. They are doing splendid work, in spite of all the handicaps mentioned above.

Moreover, other groups are following their example. Colored Big Brother and Big Sister groups are being organized in other cities as well. Soon we will have an active chain of Big Brother and Big Sister organizations functioning for colored children throughout the length and breadth of the United States.

(Reprinted from THE OUNCE)



# Juvenile Delinquency—1923

## JUDGE SCORES PROCEDURE IN JUVENILE COURT

Committing Youthful Offenders For Long Terms

On Technical Charges  
Termed Outrageous

## BOY FOUND NOT GUILTY

Richard Jenkins Freed  
From Cheltenham By  
Criminal Court Judge

In rendering a decision of not guilty in the case of Richard Jenkins, age 16, charged in the Juvenile Court of being a minor without proper care, committed to Cheltenham, and brought before him on appeal, Judge Stanton violently scored the practice of the Juvenile Court in sending boys to these institutions for long terms when they have committed trivial offenses.

Richard Jenkins and a number of boys engaged in a fight in which one of the boys was cut with a pen knife. He was tried in the Juvenile Court and committed to Cheltenham but through Atty. Roy S. Bond his case was appealed, and when the testimony was presented Judge Stanton stated that the practice of twisting these charges to fit the jurisdiction of the Juvenile Court and incarcerating these boys for long terms was an outrage.

It was pointed out that the shortest term that a boy could serve when sent to one of these institutions was 17 months, and that in many cases they had to stay until they were twenty-one, and men coming into the criminal court with past crime records and committing much greater offenses got sentences for 30 and 60 days.

There was another case recently in the courts where a man and a boy were charged jointly with larceny. The boy was tried in the Juvenile Court and committed to Cheltenham indefinitely, while the man was given a 30-day sentence.

The fault lies not in the administration of the Juvenile Court, it is declared, but in the construction of the law governing its power and jurisdiction. The Juvenile Court can only commit boys to these institutions on the technical charge of their being minors without proper care. This blanket charge is applied to every kind of charge coming into the court and the general rule is to send offenders up until they are of age, however trivial the charge. The more fortunate boys, however, are sometimes placed in homes or otherwise paroled.

This law seems to have been made especially in interest of these institutions and without regard to the best interest of the boy or girl.

The whole question of dealing with juvenile offenders should receive more consideration from leaders in religion, education and general welfare, it was pointed out.

## Mrs. McDade Resting Well From Poisoning

Mrs. Pearl McDade, 523 East Fifth street, who has been critically ill since Tuesday following the drinking of coffee that had been poisoned by a servant, in an attempt to kill her, was reported by attending physicians as resting well late Wednesday night.

Janie McCall, the eleven year old negro girl, who is said to have poured wood alcohol in Mrs. McDade's coffee, is held at police headquarters and will be turned over to the juvenile officers.

## REFORM SCHOOL FAILS TO REFORM NEGRO BOY

Fourteen-Year-Old Again in Tolls of Law at Demopolis

DEMOPOLIS, ALA., June 30—Special to The Advertiser—Late Wednesday afternoon C. L. Simmons discovered that some one had burglarized his home and had taken a gun, a flash light and small amount of money. Early the next morning he reported the case to Chief N. G. Ralley. The chief suspected Isadore King, a negro boy who recently returned to the community from the reform school. The boy confessed to the chief and brought out the gun, flash light, and about half of the money.

The culprit is only 14 years of age and was sent to Probate Judge Hasty for further disposition. The supposition is he will be sent to the reform school again. Other thefts are charged to the young negro.

## Girls Given Shack That Whites Left

Washington, D. C., Sept. 14.—The National Training School for Girls, maintained jointly by the district and federal governments, will be moved to the Ludlow farm, Prince George county, Maryland, in the near future if the plans now under consideration mature. This information was given out after the department of justice had purchased this 130-acre estate from Oliver E. Hagen for \$25,000.

The new school will, according to the present plans, house 150 white girls, while the present one will be turned over to girls of the Race who have been committed to the institution through the district and federal courts. This change was deemed necessary after a report made last year by Dr. Hastings H. Hart for the social welfare institutions of the district that the present national institution was inadequate. The white girls will therefore get a new home, while the Colored girls will be compelled to occupy the condemned, inadequate buildings.

There has been presented another plan: That the buildings and grounds of the present national school be sold and the proceeds used to build a modern school to accommodate the girls of both races, but as yet this plan has received little consideration. During a recent session of Congress an appropriation of \$52,000 was made for the purpose of building this new training school for white girls.

## ALABAMA COURT

### ORDERS BOY LASHED

Anniston, Ala., August 27.—(Special.)—The "last" has not been abolished in Anniston. At least not if applied to parents to erring children and may even be ordered by authorities in lieu of legal punishment. This was shown when William Hughes, small negro boy, who was being tried in the juvenile section of the court on a charge of burglary, was ordered flogged by his mother in the presence of officers. After the mother had complied with the court order and administered a sound thrashing, her son was turned over to her.

## Offer Place for Rescue Home in Ala.

Selma, Ala., Aug. 24.—The United Order of Good Shepherds, G. W. Chandler, president, with headquarters in Montgomery, at their 18th annual meeting just closed at Shepherdsville, 16 miles south of Selma, passed a resolution offering to donate 30 acres of their farm of 3,100

acres, to be used as a rescue home for delinquent girls. The offer was made with the privilege of buying for the same purpose, if needed, 100 acres in addition at \$30 per acre.

The offer was made also in response to an inquiry by Mrs. Bush of the child's welfare department, and in pursuance of a resolution passed by the State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs at the last annual meeting held in Mobile, selecting Shepherdsville as a suitable site for the home.

The plantation of 3,100 acres of improved and woodland was purchased several years ago by the United Order of Good Shepherds through the Mabry Securities company, Selma. It was brought out in the annual meeting that all payments on borrowed money on the plantation have been kept up and that the order holds an option on 1,100 acres of land joining the plantation, which, when negotiations are completed, will give the Good Shepherds a holding of more than 4,200 acres of some of the best land in that section.

Attending the meeting were 133 delegates from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, West Virginia, Mississippi, Kentucky, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, Illinois and Pennsylvania, representing 225 local units with a membership of several thousand in the states mentioned. The feature of the meeting was the annual address of President G. W. Chandler, founder of the order, which brought out the information that 700 acres of the farm are under cultivation by 51 families.

## NINE-YEAR-OLD IS HELD FOR MURDER

Montgomery  
Grand Jury at Mobile Indicts  
Negro Child for Killing Companion at Plateau

MOBILE, ALA., Oct. 15.—Special by Leased Wire to The Advertiser—Beatrice Hunter, a negro child, 9 years of age, was indicted for murder by the grand jury which adjourned Saturday. She is accused of stabbing to death another little negro, Aline Wilson, 12 years of age, during a quarrel at Plateau, a negro settlement north of Mobile. While the indictment for murder was found in this case, under the law the usual process cannot be followed because of the age of the defendant and it is expected that one of the circuit judges will hold a special sitting to go into the case and dispose of it.

Another indictment for murder was found against Tucker Jones, the negro who shot to death Bryant Robinson, negro, whom he alleged was endeavoring to enter the house of the Toulmin family at Toulminville, of which Jones was care-taker.

## Boys Industrial School

The State Legislature appropriated \$22,000.00 in 1923 for a Negro Boys' Industrial School to be spent as follows: \$7,000.00 available July 1923, of which \$5,000.00 must be spent for permanent improvement and \$2,000 for salaries. The remaining \$15,000.00 is not available until July, 1924.

Prof. T. W. Coggs of Pine Bluff has been appointed superintendent of the school and he had hoped to get the State Federation of Colored women's clubs to sell the holdings which they acquired several years ago for a Reform School and this together with what might be supplemented by Negro Fraternal and charitable organizations throughout the state would be used to maintain the school until the State Funds could be used next July. But the State Federation could not be induced to sell their property on such short notice hence it is very likely that the Industrial Home will not be opened before July, 1924.

Jewish Big Brother League  
Baltimore  
URGE SUPPORT OF COLORED  
BIG BROTHER ORGANIZATION

A little less than a year ago the Jewish Big Brother League of Baltimore was very happy to learn that a movement had been started among the Negroes of this city to organize a Big Brother and Big Sister organization similar in scope and purpose to the Big Brother League. The movement was based on the thought that there was a need and an opportunity to carry on constructive work among colored children and adults tending towards delinquency and to engage in helpful reformatory work with juvenile and adult offenders.

The men and women who became interested in the movement were informed that large numbers of colored boys and girls and men and women were living amid conditions



that make for crime and that little or no efforts were being made by the better situated groups in the colored community to improve, by means of practical and social-minded Big Brothers and Big Sisters, the crime producing conditions. They also learned that hundreds of colored children and adults pass through the Juvenile and Criminal Courts, not to mention the police courts, and are committed to reformatories and penal institutions without coming into contact with the educated and capable members of their community, except the handful of colored probation officers of the Juvenile and Criminal Courts and an occasional social worker. They realized, in other words, that, with the exception of three or four public officials, very few of the more than one hundred thousand Negroes of this community were giving practical consideration to the question of delinquency among Baltimore Negroes.

When these facts were presented there was organized a colored Big Brother and Big Sister organization. A number of the leading Negro men and women were named on the Boards of Directors of the Big Brother and Big Sister groups. Periodic meetings were held to plan the program which they had set before them, but until the present time very little has been accomplished in the direction of concrete performance. This has been due, first of all, to the fact that there was lacking a powerful driving impulse to effect organizations that would tackle seriously the scores upon scores of cases of Negro delinquency, and, secondly, to the fact that no money was forthcoming to pay the modest expenses that the work in the beginning would incur. The result is that the enthusiasm which was aroused some eight or nine months ago has begun to wane and that unless the situation is taken hold of seriously the Big Brother and Big Sister movement among the colored people of this city will, at least for a time, become extinct.

The Jewish Big Brother League does not desire to set itself up as an example, and does not intend to preach to other groups. It merely wishes to address itself to the thinking members of the Negro community and to urge that a colored Big Brother and Big Sister movement be

organized without delay and that the Negroes of Baltimore exert every effort to solve as well as they can the social problems that confront them. Particularly the problem of delinquency. To this end, the Jewish Big Brother League would suggest that the several colored fraternal organizations, which number perhaps thousands of men and women, form a general committee to co-operate with the committees already formed to provide a sufficient sum of money annually to make possible the development of a powerful colored Big Brother and Big Sister movement. The amount involved is so small that it could be raised without general appeals and without extraordinary efforts.

The Jewish Big Brother League has been the pioneer organization in the Big Brother field in Baltimore. Recently the Catholic Big Brother organization started work among Catholic children. It is of vital importance that Big Brother and Big Sister work be initiated among colored children and adults as quickly as possible in order that a long felt need may be filled and in order that a situation that is becoming increasingly more difficult be corrected and made the groundwork for a better community life.

Thus far the brunt of the work has been borne by Miss Elsie M. Mountain, directress of the Sharp Street Memorial Community House, who no doubt has more than enough to do without bearing the responsibility of making possible a Big Brother and Big Sister movement.

# 12-YEAR-OLD HOPED TO KILL ENTIRE FAMILY *Afro-American* *Fired of "Minding White* *Baltimore* *Baby" He Puts Strych-* *Maryland* *nine in Food* *8-10-28* INFANT IS DEAD

## Best Way Boy Thought To Get Chance To Play and Rest

Centreville, Md., Aug. 8.—What the police believe was a plot by a 12-year-old boy to wipe out a white family of husband and wife and two infant children was uncovered today by Justice Coursey, after William, 1-year-old son of William C. Hall, white, of Church Hill, had died ostensibly from injuries received in a fall.

The funeral was halted at 2 o'clock this afternoon while a coroner's inquest was held, which brought out evidence that Frank Bryson had placed quantities of strychnine in the baby's milk and had scattered the poison in salt, sugar, oatmeal and coffee about the Hall home, with the confessed intention of killing Hall.

Bryson admitted causing the death of the child because he was "tired of attending" it, and said that he tried to kill Hall because he had been reprimanded for staying out late last Saturday night. The boy was placed in Centreville jail this afternoon.

The boy took the child in a small express wagon yesterday and it was supposed that in crossing the street the child fell out and suffered injuries which caused its death.

Immediately afterward the infant suffered violent convulsions, and fearful that the fall had resulted in concussion of the brain, the parents started with it for the Emergency Hospital, Easton, but the baby died soon after they had left Centreville.

Returning to their home, members of the family were perplexed by a bitter taste in the coffee, sugar and other foods. Hall complained of violent pains in his stomach, and it was finally decided that some foreign substance had gotten into the food. Even at that time, however, no thought was given to poison and the colored boy was not suspected. This morning Justice Coursey received notice of the occurrence and questioning the boy learned that the plot had nearly resulted in wiping out

the entire Hall family.

Between sobs in the Justice's office the lad narrated the story of how he had determined to "get even" with his employer, and at the same time rid himself of the bothersome job of attending to one of the children. He told how he had seen Mrs. Hall use the strychnine last week to kill mice and sprinkled liberal portions in the bowl which he knew members of the family would use for breakfast.

Fearing that the infant would escape, the boy placed some of the poison in its milk bottle and more of it on the bottle nipple.

Bryson said he did not understand why he had to use all his time taking care of children with no time for rest or recreation.